THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The officer was considered for grant of Permanent Commission (PC) in 2001. Since he did not fulfill the minimum performance criteria for grant of PC, an order was issued for his release from service with effect from 20-02-2003, on completion of tenure of Short Service Commission. The officer challenged the release order in Delhi High Court alleging he was denied PC on account of an injury sustained in an aircraft accident. The High Court directed the Air Force to grant PC to the petitioner. Accordingly, the release order was cancelled on 18-02-2003 and the officer is continuing in service.

The Judgement is being studied in consultation with the Ministry of Law for further appropriate action.

Unidentified Aircraft

4821. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state.

(a) whether an unidentified aircraft was sighted 180 nautical miles off Chennai on 3rd February, 2003;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) what follow up action has been taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Modernisaton of Army

4822. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Army would focus on a modernisation plan;

(b) if so, the details thereof ;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Indian commandos have suffered due to ad-hoc policies of Government :

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) how would Government equip the Indian commandos to face the threat scenario during post 9/11?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Modernisation of the defence forces, including the Army is an ongoing process keeping in view the security imperatives and threat perceptions. Some of the thrust areas of modernization of Army during the 10th plan are (i) upgradation of major combat systems of Armour, Artillery, Mechanised Infantry; (ii) improve